



# **Welcome to the Canadian Office & Professional Employees Union, Local 378**

## **Member Information Package**

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## Introduction

Welcome. Local 378 of the Canadian Office & Professional Employees Union (COPE) represents about 10,500 union members at public and private sector companies such as:

ABSU	Coast Mountain Bus	Pacific Vehicle Testing
ABSUI	Discount	Ricoh Canada
Avis	Dollar Thrifty	Schneider Electric
BCAA	Fortis	Southern Rail of BC
BCGEU	Greyhound Canada	Teletheatre BC
BCHydro	Handy Pack	Terasen Gas
BC Transit	Hastings Entertainment	TransLink
BC Transmission Corp	Hertz Canada Ltd.	Tree Island Industries
Berlitz Canada	Insurance Corp of BC	Working Enterprises
Canadian Northern Shield	Konica Minolta	
Capilano College	National Car Rental	

We are the largest local of our Canadian Union which represents over 33,000 members, and we are affiliated to the BC Federation of Labour, the Canadian Labour Congress and Provincial Labour Councils.

We are a diverse and socially responsible union, working together with many community groups to ensure the public and elected government representatives are aware of the benefits that unions bring to the economy of our Province and country overall.

We believe that everyone can make a difference and invite you to learn more about the COPE 378.

## **You are a Union member**

As an employee of our bargaining units, you are also a Union member. Through the Labour Relations Board of BC your fellow workers made application to have the COPE Local 378 certified as the sole and exclusive bargaining agent to represent you as an employee in all matters of employment during the life of the agreement and during collective bargaining.

As an employee of one of our bargaining units, it is a condition of employment that you belong to our Union. When you were hired by the employer you should have signed a dues authorization form whereby dues are authorized to be deducted monthly and are submitted to the COPE office. Our dues are relatively low in comparison to other Unions and represent 1½% of your monthly earnings. Union finances are covered more fully in our booklet “COPE 378 Our Canadian Union” and our Union Constitution & Bylaws.

The Union represents us collectively and our Order of Certification is very important to us. We believe that by working together through our Union, we can negotiate with our employer from a position of strength and cooperation and have an effective voice in determining our working conditions.

As a member, each of us together as co-workers are the Union. Our Union exists to promote democratic and collective action to improve working conditions and the standard of living for us as workers.

## Why Unions?

Unions are groups of working people who join together to talk about wages and conditions of work instead of workers talking to employers on an individual basis. Because they speak for everybody, unions can get a better deal for each worker than one employee could by negotiating with the employer. This is because an employer will play off individual workers and groups of workers against each other.

In Canada, the union concept of strength in unity came into existence in the early 1800s. Through collective action, workers formed unions so they could have a voice in deciding wages, hours, working conditions and dealing with the many problems that arise at the workplace. But, just as the formation of unions in themselves did not solve all workers' problems then, unions today continue the fight to achieve better contracts and improved legislation.

In 1872, Toronto Printers mounted a vigorous campaign for the 9-hour day and 54-hour week. In the same year, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald finally introduced a law in Parliament; and from that time on, Canadian workers had the legal right to form unions and to act through them to achieve better wages and conditions.

More than 100 years have passed. Workers have achieved many of the early goals by collective bargaining and by political action. Unions have won legislation to end the exploitation of child labour, regulate daily and weekly hours of work, guarantee paid vacations, to provide workers' compensation for the

injured, insurance for the unemployed and pensions for the elderly. This is an important record of "non-contract" achievements and an inheritance which unions jealously guard and fight for today.

The union movement's efforts to gain recognition in the past 100 years are little remembered or known but remain a very important part of history, involving great sacrifice and bitter struggle before the principle of collective bargaining was accepted in major industries and as a part of Canadian society. Historically, the owners of industry held the view that since they owned the workplace, they, therefore, had the sole right to determine the conditions of employment. Even in the 1980's, workers have continued to witness that kind of anti-union/anti-worker attitude which was manifested in such national disputes as the Eaton's, Visa and Gainers strikes over basic union rights.

In these and most situations across Canada prior to a union entering the workplace, the "open door" policy of management often existed. Workers were encouraged to bring their problems directly to the boss. Those who trusted this procedure usually went out – not only the same door, but the workplace as well. The establishment of a contract and an effective steward system by a union means the workers have the right to talk back through their organization via the grievance procedure if they feel they have been treated unfairly.

Collective agreements between unions and employers contain many provisions

that many people don't know about. For instance, they cover the grievance procedure you've just read about. They also regulate the number of hours employees may work each day and each week, and other provisions such as notice of any overtime to be worked and how much pay will be received for overtime. Issues such as wages and holidays, job security, benefits and paid leave need more than simple discussion. They have to be bargained about. This is because for any employer, higher wages mean higher costs. For employees, however, low wages mean they can't afford to buy things they want. Eventually compromise is reached which both sides accept.

Unions are not just organizations trying to get more dollars and cents or better working conditions for people who hold union cards. People who don't enjoy the benefits of union protection get benefits too. If you look back at Canada's history you'll observe that many of the rights and benefits we all enjoy were initially fought for and won by unions. The labour movement was in the forefront of the struggles for public health care, for public education, for minimum wages, holidays and employment conditions.

We all work 40 hours a week or less instead of 60 or more because the unions periodically went on strike for a shorter work week, despite the warnings of employers that they'd never be able to afford it. Many of us will receive pensions from our employers when we retire because the unions went on strike for that benefit too. And paid maternity leave has recently been added to many

workers' benefits, largely because their unions fought for it.

Today it is more important to recognize that, when anyone works without a collective agreement, management has the right to treat it's workers in any way it wants. Workers would have no protection from a management that could alter any work process or pick favourites and play off worker against worker. Without a union acting as a form of insurance, workers are like sitting ducks in a shooting gallery.

In spite of these advances, two-thirds of Canada's labour force still does not belong to unions. This creates a perpetual and dangerous division among working people. Many non-union workers are desperately poor and unemployment is high. Government and business leaders are well-satisfied to keep it that way, with minimum labour standards and restrictive collective bargaining legislation. Time and again the organized and unorganized are played off against each other on picket lines, on worksites and in the political arena. These "confrontations", together with the introduction of new labour-saving technologies, layoffs, plant closures and public sector cutbacks, all pose an unprecedented challenge to the ability of unions to protect the security of their membership and to effectively represent their interests.

Critics from the corporate sector, the government and the media have decried unions for becoming too powerful and for their use of the "strike weapon". This charge is almost ludicrous considering the massive concentrations of wealth and power in those quarters the critics occupy. If unions were even one-tenth

as powerful as they are thought to be, they would be able to organize the six million Canadian workers still outside unions. They would be winning more of their strikes and increasing their members' wage rates a lot more than they actually are.

Unions negotiate for agreements – not strikes. No union wants a strike. Strikes develop when both sides can in no other way reach an agreement. To a union member, a strike means sacrifice for themselves and their families. Workers won't go on strike unless the issues involved are so great they are worth the sacrifice. Unions always conduct membership votes before taking strike action and a strike occurs only when approved by a clear majority.

It is inconceivable that workers would walk a picket line in all kinds of weather, sometimes having confrontation with police and strikebreakers, existing on strike pay that is only a fraction of their normal income if a majority of them were opposed to the strike. It simply couldn't happen.

Most union leaders measure their success by the extent to which they can avoid strikes, and they do manage to settle 95 out of 100 contract negotiations without a strike. But a .950 batting average evidently doesn't satisfy some of the public and the press. Strikes are controversial and controversy makes news. This, no doubt, is why many people think strikes are the rule rather than the exception.

Why unions? Because to most workers a union represents security in the workplace, dignity on the job and a means to a better life.

Before unions were established there was:

- No seniority
- No job security
- No representation
- No grievance procedure
- No job classifications
- No health and safety programme
- No protective equipment
- No preference of shift
- No relief periods
- No work standards
- No uniform pay scale
- No guaranteed wage increases
- No cost-of-living raises
- No overtime pay after 8 hours
- No time and a half for Saturdays
- No double time for Sundays
- No shift premiums
- No call-in pay
- No rotation of premium time
- No paid vacations or holidays
- No paid absence allowance
- No jury duty pay
- No bereavement pay
- No life insurance benefits
- No sick and accident benefits
- No long-term disability benefits
- No medicare protection
- No unemployment benefits
- No short work-week benefits
- No severance pay
- No early retirement
- No prescription drugs
- No dental programme
- No voluntary overtime

# **Benefits of Belonging to a Union**

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

A grievance procedure ensures an orderly and timely process for resolution of a problem in the workplace.

COPE Local 378 is our sole and exclusive bargaining agent and our Job Stewards and Union Reps must ensure the conditions in our agreement are followed by the members and by the Employer. When we become aware of a violation of our contract, a grievance is initiated. Although you may be directly affected by the outcome of a grievance, grievances are the property of the Union.

Whenever you become aware of a violation of the contract, notify your Job Steward as soon as possible. You should read your grievance procedure and be aware there are time limits specified so it is very important to let your Job Steward know of a problem as soon as possible.

Members should read over the grievance procedure and let their job steward know if they have any questions.

## **SENIORITY**

The Union movement fought long and hard to establish the principle of seniority. Seniority is your length of continued service within a bargaining unit as a member in good standing of Local 378. As you earn more seniority and service you are entitled to increased job security and benefits such as increased opportunities for job advancement, increased bumping and placement as well as severance pay entitlement and increased vacation entitlement. Seniority is a means by which our Union can determine that the Employer has acted in a non-arbitrary manner and a test to make certain that there is justice and reasonableness in the workplace.

## **JUST CAUSE**

As a Union member, Unions offer much for workers. Under the BC Labour Relations Code and your Collective Agreement the Employer must prove just or proper cause for discipline or dismissal. Just cause is the proof the Employer must produce before a tribunal that discipline is warranted and necessary. The onus or the burden of proof is on the Employer to prove a case not on the Employee to prove he is not guilty.

It is only after the Employer has presented the proof that the Employee is called upon to disprove. It is important because it is this principle that disallows Employers from acting in an arbitrary and an unjust manner.

It is important we represent all members who are disciplined by the employer. Under Labour Law, Union's have a duty to represent their members. Union officers cannot act in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner or act in bad faith. All members are entitled to representation.

In a non-union job if you're fired without proper cause the best you could get would be minimal severance pay. You would not get your job back.

# Union Social Objectives

*A handout from the Canadian Labour Congress*

## Labour's Social Objectives

The social objectives of the Canadian labour movement are a reflection of the aims and desires of a large segment of the country's working population. The programme of the Canadian Labour Congress with regard to social legislation, as in other matters, has a grassroots basis. Local unions and district labour councils initiate proposals which go before conventions for consideration. The labour movement's policies on social and other issues come under scrutiny by rank-and-file delegates to these conventions and their decisions determine objectives to be sought from the various levels of government by the Canadian Labour Congress, its affiliated organizations, and its chartered provincial federations of labour and chartered labour councils.

The interest of the organized labour movement in social issues goes back many years. A desire to put in place social changes was one of the strongest influences in bringing about a working relationship between individual unions and the development of central labour organizations. Today this continues to be a unifying force in the structure of the Canadian Labour Congress.

As early as the late 1800's, Canadian trade unionists were actively seeking legislative changes which would improve working conditions, not only for themselves but for all workers. They wanted factory laws to control and improve working conditions and safety practices; the abolition of piece work and the elimination of "sweat shops"; an end to the use of prison labour in competition with other workers; abolition of child labour and the imposition of regulations

covering the employment of women; and shorter hours – the eight-hour day and six-day week.

But the interests of the movement were not restricted to conditions of employment and working conditions. There were resolutions for expansion of educational facilities, including the introduction of some form of technical education.

In the deliberations of labour conventions since 1898, there have been changes, sometimes in subject matter and sometimes only in emphasis: **but there has always been a persistent theme of concern with social issues which affect all citizens.** The trade union movement has seen itself as a spokesperson for ordinary working Canadians in these issues.

## Health Programmes

By their very nature, unions have always been involved in protecting the occupational health and safety of their members; and where medical services and facilities did not exist, unions were frequently the pioneers in helping to establish them within the community. Unions also pioneered in negotiating prepaid medical care programmes for their members and families; and such coverage became commonplace. However, the lack of available health care to all Canadians caused the labour movement to redouble its long-standing efforts to have a national medicare plan by which **needed medical services would be available to all Canadians**

**whatever their financial means.** This was eventually achieved.

Today the labour movement, along with others, is faced with the task of not only establishing and maintaining a system which is universal in application and comprehensive in coverage, but also for a plan that does not have an economic barrier between the service and those who need it.

Medicare as a system of universal health care must be regarded as a public service and not merely as an insurance programme under which only a limited number of services are available. Canadians should not be obliged to pay extra charges for any type of health care service. Preventing the erosion of Medicare must now be considered a major target of Canadian development.

## **Pensions**

In the area of pensions, unions have consistently negotiated improvements in their private pension plans and worked toward greater control of these plans by the workers involved.

**Only 41.4 percent of employed Canadians (50.1 percent of men and 33.7 percent of women) belong to company pension plans – including the plans that governments establish for their own employees.**

All others must rely on the woefully inadequate Old Age Pension plus Canada or Quebec Pension Plans.

Since the mid-1970's, a major debate on pension reform has been taking place. Throughout this debate, the CLC has argued that Canada and Quebec Pension Plan benefits must be doubled. This is the only way that retiring workers and their surviving spouses will be able to maintain their standard of living in retirement.

The Congress – and virtually all other labour organizations and women's and retiree's groups – has called for:

- increases in the benefits under Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement to make sure that all older Canadians have income above the poverty line;
- changes to the design of the Canada Pension Plan to improve its fairness to women and homemakers; and
- changes to the regulations governing company pension plans.

The CLC is convinced that an upgraded universal plan would eliminate any fear and want from old age.

## **Poverty and Regional Disparities**

The Canadian Labour Congress has continually drawn attention to the unjust disparities existing among various sections of Canadian society and among different regions.

In an effort to establish a **higher degree of equality**, a programme has been advanced which includes:

- a full employment programme for all those able and willing to work, complemented by a meaningful manpower programme;
- a guaranteed annual income;
- a major revision, strengthening and expansion of the present inadequate social security and transfer payment programmes;
- improvements in minimum wage legislation to guarantee a decent income for all Canadians.

## **Human Rights**

The Canadian Labour Congress has devoted considerable effort to combating discrimination and protecting basic human rights. To this end, there has been a continual effort to obtain the

enactment of more effective legislation, coupled with adequate enforcement machinery. There is also a standing proposal for the inclusion in collective agreements of a clause to prevent discrimination against employees for reason of race, colour, sex, national origin, union activity or age.

The plight of the Indians, Inuit and Metis of Canada is of deep concern to union members and proposals have been advanced for providing assistance in the form of decent housing, proper health and sanitation facilities and adequate educational and job opportunities, as well as recognition of treaty or aboriginal rights.

## Education

A basic human right, education must be available to all Canadians. The labour movement has, since its inception, promoted a policy of free and equal access to all levels of education. A publicly-funded system, schools must respond to the needs of their communities, their students and society. **The responsibility to present a well-rounded picture of all participating partners in the Canadian mosaic is a basic principle of an education system.**

The ability to learn and the right to education is not limited to children and adolescents. The CLC believes that new emphasis must be placed on the changing personal and manpower goals of adults. The necessary programmes and funding must be put in place to encourage lifelong learning, to utilize the full potential of our society. Paid educational leave, providing normal earnings and benefits during a period of leave from the labour force to return to school, is the mechanism to ensure access to recurrent education for all Canadians.

Curriculum content in schools must include a history and review of the contributions that unions have made in the development of this country.

## Immigration

The Canadian Labour Congress has never opposed immigration, but it has taken the position that the immigration programme must be geared to the needs of the economy. The admission of immigrants for whom there are no jobs and no houses is regarded as a disservice, both to the immigrants and to Canada. The CLC has consistently fought against all forms of discrimination in the country's immigration policy.

## Housing

Although the government has improved housing programmes in recent years, more effort should be directed to medium- and low-income people. Not only the construction of new houses, but also the rehabilitation of existing houses in substandard condition is required.

To accomplish this the CLC advocates:

- that housing be regarded by governments as a social need and not as a regulator of economic activity;
- that the principle of a subsidized mortgage rate be recognized and applied in such a way as to make housing available to that part of the population whose income is otherwise insufficient;
- that massive land assembly programmes be instituted with procedures to identify the obstacles to such programmes and the provisions of means to cope with them;
- that urban land be acquired by public agencies and held in perpetuity to be leased to meet Canada's housing needs;

- that the amount of money for housing supplied by the federal government be substantially increased and primarily directed to finance housing for lower and middle-income groups;
- that steps be taken to improve the quality of social and other services connected with public housing;
- that imaginative educational programmes be under-taken by the appropriate agencies of government, designed to overcome the opposition to public housing.

The CLC has always given strong support to the co-operative movement in all its activities and has favoured adoption of the co-operative approach in housing. It has also sought expansion of programs for slum clearance and urban renewal.

## Taxation

Taxation policies are naturally a matter of concern to Canadian workers. In the deliberations of the Canadian Labour Congress there has been full recognition that many of the proposals being advanced require the expenditure of additional funds. At the same time, there is a strong feeling among union members that adjustments should be made **to distribute more equitably the burden of taxes.**

The report of the Royal Commission on Taxation (the Carter Report), which described the existing taxation system as unfair, received strong support from the CLC.

This applied particularly to the Carter recommendation designed to relate taxes more directly to ability to pay and saying that the base for taxation purposes should be the family unit and not the individual. The report proposed to treat, for tax purposes, all forms of income alike regardless of

their source, an approach that has been referred to as “a buck is a buck” and the principle of which the CLC has endorsed.

## Consumer Services

Members of trade unions are consumers as well as producers and the CLC recognizes the existence of a very great need for more vigorous action to protect the interests of all consumers, union members and the public at large.

With this in mind, efforts have been made to have the government undertake an investigation of **the disparity between food prices paid to farmers and those charged to consumers.**

At the same time, the CLC favours:

- improvements in the legislation dealing with truth in advertising and packaging;
- extension of consumer education and promotion of co-operatives;
- legislation to reduce interest rates on small loans;
- support for co-operatives and credit unions.

The CLC is opposed to the use of trading stamps and similar practices and has called for legislation to protect consumers from some of the dangers of unrestricted implementation of the automatic checkout system in supermarkets, called the Universal Product Code.

# Collective Agreement

The Collective Agreement is your Contract of Employment. John P. Sanderson, in this book, The Art of Collective Bargaining wrote:

“In a general sense, a collective agreement is a collection of commitments in writing by an employer, a union and a group of employees to do certain things and not to do certain other things. More importantly, it is a living record of the continuing relationship between an employer, a union and a group of employees, binding on them all, to be respected or reviled but, in any event, to govern the relationship of the parties and provide a code of conduct for them to follow and enforce against each other”.

Our fellow members fought long and hard to acquire the wages and working conditions in our union contract. As new members, we get to enjoy these benefits but we also have a responsibility to maintain them. It is our duty to uphold these benefits and make union officers and staff aware of any erosion of working conditions or any incidents where the company does not uphold the collective agreement.

# Collective Bargaining

Employees joining together and participating in a union are what make a union work. Our ability to win better working conditions and salaries depends on the strength we have as a group. This collective strength is why unionized employees earn higher wages and have better working conditions, more benefits and legal rights than non-unionized employees.

The contract that you live and work with today is part of an evolutionary process. It should be better than the previous agreement, but not as good as the next one.

The collective agreement, as a document, is really the end result of a process that begins at the time the previous agreement was concluded.

Both sides, Union and employer, enter the process with definite goals they want to accomplish. How successful they are depends in large part upon their strength when they go into it, their strength as they move through it, and their strength as they come out of it. Collective bargaining always involves a contest of strength between two competing forces.

Simply put, the contest comes from the fact that labour and management have clearly opposing interests, and different points of view.

The goal of management is to operate the workplace in an efficient and profitable manner. This means that they want to operate with as few restrictions as possible, while getting as much work from their Employees as they can at the cheapest cost they can get away with.

In other words, they want more work for less money.

The goals of the Union, on the other hand, is to see that the workplace operates in a way which does not damage the quality of life of the workers. This means that we need to restrict the employers' right to make arbitrary decisions, while earning enough money to provide for ourselves and our families, and with as much time away from work as possible in order to spend time with our families, and on our hobbies.

In other words, we want a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

In the collective bargaining process, the two sides meet, and argue for their basic interests. Each side eventually gets somewhat less than it wanted, but a level that each can agree upon and live with for awhile is always arrived at sooner or later. At that point, a collective agreement is signed outlining the terms of the settlement. Union members elect their own bargaining committees and decide what to propose as changes in their contract.

Members should read this information and if they have any questions, get back to you.

## **The Collective Bargaining Process**

Each Collective Agreement has a specified term (usually 1, 2 or 3 years) and must be renegotiated each time it expires.

It is during this negotiating procedure, called Collective Bargaining, that new salaries are determined and many of the other articles of the Agreement are discussed and amended.

A member of the full-time staff usually leads negotiations, assisted by a Committee elected by, and from among, the Stewards and Executive Officers of your bargaining unit.

Prior to the beginning of negotiations all members of the bargaining unit are invited to submit their suggestions for improving the terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement.

Once the compiled suggestions are ratified (i.e. voted on by the membership that bargaining unit - or the elected Stewards and Councillors in the case of Hydro and I.C.B.C.) your Committee formally meets the management representatives at negotiations.

Each proposal must be explained and supported by relevant facts and comparisons. Gradually the process of bargaining changes the proposal to a form that the parties can agree to and, one by one they are subsequently either signed off or withdrawn.

When negotiations reach an impasse (e.g. the employer claims to have made his "final" offer on outstanding items and your negotiating committee feels it cannot recommend those proposed terms of settlement) it generally becomes necessary to obtain a strike vote mandate.

This mandate gives your negotiating committee the power to apply pressure to obtain further concessions at the bargaining table. It is not uncommon for the employer to table several so-called "final offers", each a bit better than the last, before your negotiating committee feels it can recommend the proposed terms of settlement. Sometime a ban on overtime, "working to rule," or some other form of job action will be required to effect such a settlement. An "all out" strike is authorized only in instances where less costly action is ineffective.

Mediation and Labour Relations Board may be made available to the parties in an effort to help them resolve a conflict or potential conflict.

Finally, when your negotiating committee feels the proposed terms of settlement are the best they can hope to achieve, you still have the final say at meetings called for the purpose of ratifying the proposed settlement. Only when you and the other members in your bargaining unit vote by majority to accept the proposed terms do they become part of your Collective Agreement.

## **Do's and don'ts for membership during negotiations:**

- DO** support your negotiating committee's efforts and strategies;
- DO** attend and vote at all union meetings;
- DO** support the democratic decision of the majority;
- DO** recognize that it is not in your own best interests for your negotiating committee to release detailed information until negotiations are almost ended, and then such information is released at membership meetings;
- DO** put a quick stop to rumours by getting the correct facts from your Job Steward;
- DO** maintain confidence and solidarity.
- DON'T** let management know what you would accept;
- DON'T** discuss any part of the negotiations with management;
- DON'T** let management know if you are not happy with the negotiating committee;
- DO** let your negotiating committee know (privately).
- DON'T** circulate petitions of any sort;
- DON'T** pass any union materials (bulletins, etc.) to management;
- DON'T** believe anything you hear or see in the news media unless it is confirmed by your negotiating committee;
- DON'T** perpetuate rumours;
- DON'T** criticize the democratic decisions of the majority.

**IF YOU HAVE A CONCERN ABOUT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS  
PLEASE TALK TO STEWARDS, OFFICERS AND/OR STAFF OF THE UNION.  
DO NOT TALK TO MANAGEMENT**

## **If you have a problem**

Anything to do with your employment; wages, promotion, overtime, welfare plans, discipline, etc., **SEE YOUR JOB STEWARD.**

The Steward will be able to determine whether or not you have a legitimate complaint (probably in consultation with one of the Union's full time Union Representatives) and will accompany you when you talk to your manager or supervisor about your complaint.

### **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU ENLIST THE STEWARDS' AID IN PROCESSING YOUR COMPLAINT**

The Steward is there to advise you, to protect your rights, and to act as witness to any statements or commitments made. This is very important should your grievance subsequently be taken to the higher stages (see your Collective Agreement; the section titled "Grievance Procedure").

# **Structure of COPE Local 378**

## **Unions are a democracy**

COPE members run our union. All union officers are elected by the members in their workplace. The COPE 378 President, Executive Board and Council members stand for election every three years. Job Stewards are also elected from their work areas.

## **Constitution and By-Laws**

The rules governing Local 378 are its Constitution and By-Laws. You, along with all the other members of the local are the only ones who can make amendments to the Constitution or change the dues structure. These decisions are made by secret ballot voting at Regional Membership Meetings held throughout the Province. Job Stewards have a copy of the Union Constitution and By-Laws which you should take the time to read through.

## **Executive Council**

This is the senior policy-making body of the union. COPE has a very democratic structure because in our union, the approximately 100 member Executive Council is responsible for policy, the annual budget and major financial decisions. There is one Executive Councillor for every 80-100 members and they meet at least five times a year.

## **Duties of Executive Councillors**

Councillors bring forward suggestions from stewards and members on ways the union can improve its policies, services to members or financial management. These issues are debated at Executive Council meetings. Councillors act as Chief Job Stewards, recruiting and advising job stewards in their constituency. Councillors also inform members in their area about union decisions.

## **Executive Board**

The union's Executive Board is made up of 16 officers, which includes the President, 3 Vice-Presidents, Secretary Treasurer and 11 Directors. The Board is the administrative management body of the union and meets monthly to discuss recommendations to Council on policy and financial matters.

## **Duties of Executive Board**

The Executive Board suggests ways the union can improve its policies, services to members or financial management. Board members represent the interests of the members in the bargaining units they represent. They sit on the union negotiating committee when their company is bargaining.

## **Table Officers**

Table Officers are the President, the 3 Vice-Presidents elected by their respective bargaining units and the Secretary-Treasurer. They represent the interests of all union members in discussions at Board and Council meetings on matters regarding administration, policies and financial decisions of the union.

## **The President**

The President assigns staff responsibilities and manages the union office, chairs executive meetings and acts as the union's representative to all outside unions, labour and government organizations and conventions.

## **Trustees**

Trustees, who shall hold no other office in the union, shall examine the books and Executive Board and Executive Council minutes of the union at least once every three months and determine whether all receipts have been properly recorded and all expenditures duly authorized. They shall report in writing to the Executive Board and Executive Council every quarter.

**Union Representatives and administrative support staff are employed in the union office**

## **Union Representatives**

Union Reps are full-time employees in the union office who provide technical advice to Stewards and Councillors and teach them how to handle complaints and stage one grievances. Reps handle more complex grievances, keep members up-to-date on grievance status, take members' cases to arbitration and act as coordinators of bargaining teams during contract negotiations.

## **Administrative Support Staff**

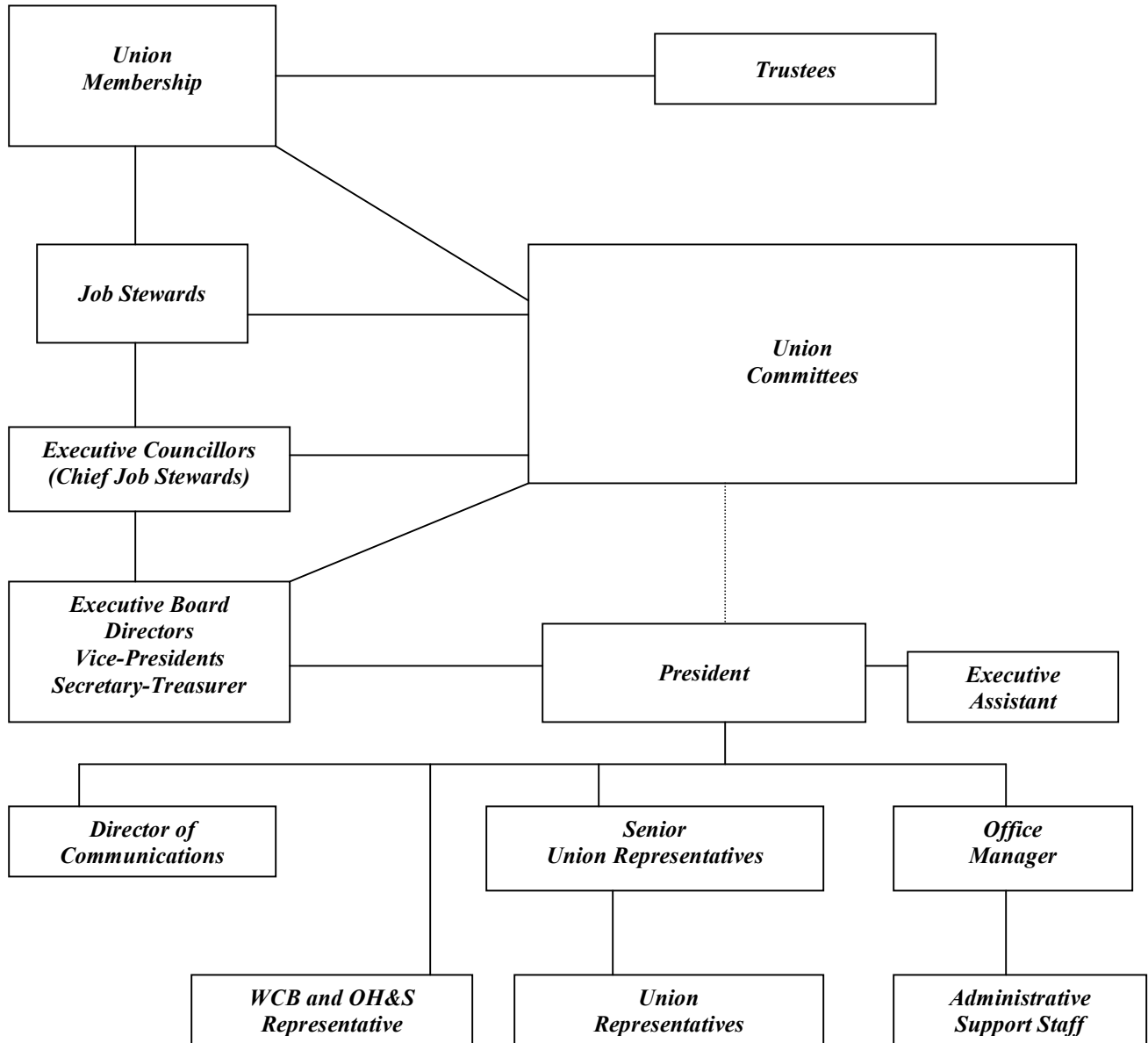
Administrative support staff are responsible for ensuring membership, steward and councillor address and phone lists are up-to-date, recording information on grievance files, advising members about meetings and ensuring that union officers have appropriate forms, bulletins and union booklets to perform their duties.

## **Communications**

Local 378 has a Communications Director who handles union communications programs. This includes developing communications strategies, writing and producing

the union newspaper, *COPE 378 News*, and other publications as well as handling media relations. COPE has a website at [www.cope378.ca](http://www.cope378.ca)

# COPE LOCAL 378 ORGANIZATION CHART



## **COPE LOCAL 378 - COMMITTEES**

COPE Local 378 also has several Committees. I refer you to a brief description of what each committee does. If you are interested in more information on Committees or would like to participate in some manner contact the Union office.

<b>ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0001</b>
Deliberates on matters of business or policy referred to it by the Executive Board, Executive Council or the general membership	
<b>ARBITRATION REVIEW COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0009</b>
Reviews potential arbitrations and decides whether or not the Local should take the case to arbitration.	
<b>CONSTITUTION &amp; BY-LAWS COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0003</b>
Reviews the Constitution & By-Laws and recommends any changes needed.	
<b>EDUCATION COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0004</b>
Decides what education and training programs the Local needs and organizes programs.	
<b>ELECTORAL COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0021</b>
Ensures Councillor representation keeps pace with membership change.	
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0005</b>
Designed to address health and safety matters pertaining to the COPE members.	
<b>HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0029</b>
Become familiar with "Human Rights" legislation and monitor the affects on contract language ie. seniority rights, training, employment equity, etc.	
<b>NOMINATING COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0024</b>
Is responsible for accepting candidate nominations and ensuring that the provisions of the Constitution are complied with for all elections of officers.	
<b>PENSION COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0023</b>
Monitors changes in pension legislation, acts as a resource for bargaining committees, liaisons with other unions on pension issues.	
<b>POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0034</b>
Participates and assists the Union in all aspects of political activity to protect and advance the objectives of the Union.	

<b>STAFF RELATIONS COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0022</b>
Responsible for policy recommendations for compensation for staff employees of the Union.	
<b>WOMEN'S COMMITTEE</b>	<b>COPE378/CMIT/CC0008</b>
To encourage full involvement of women members within the Local.	

## **COPE LOCAL 378 AFFILIATIONS**

COPE Local 378 is not an island unto itself but a significant part of the overall labour community.

COPE Local 378 is a Local of our National Union. COPE National is comprised over 31,000 members in Canada. Our local is the largest Canadian local. This is one of our most important affiliations and recognizes the common interest we have with other office, technical and professional employees.

Our National pays our per capita dues to the CLC – the Canadian Labour Congress, of which we are a member. The CLC is made up of 2.4 Million affiliated members and represents an important national labour voice.

In B.C. as affiliates of the CLC we are members of the B.C. Federation of Labour – which is made up of 1100 Locals, and approximately 450,000 members in B.C. Also Provincially, we have members on various Labour Councils.

To all these very important organizations a percentage of our dues are paid on a per capita (per number of members basis).

You will notice the structure of the labour movement parallels that of government.

Municipally	-	Labour Councils
Provincially	-	B.C. Federation of Labour
Federally	-	Canadian Labour Congress

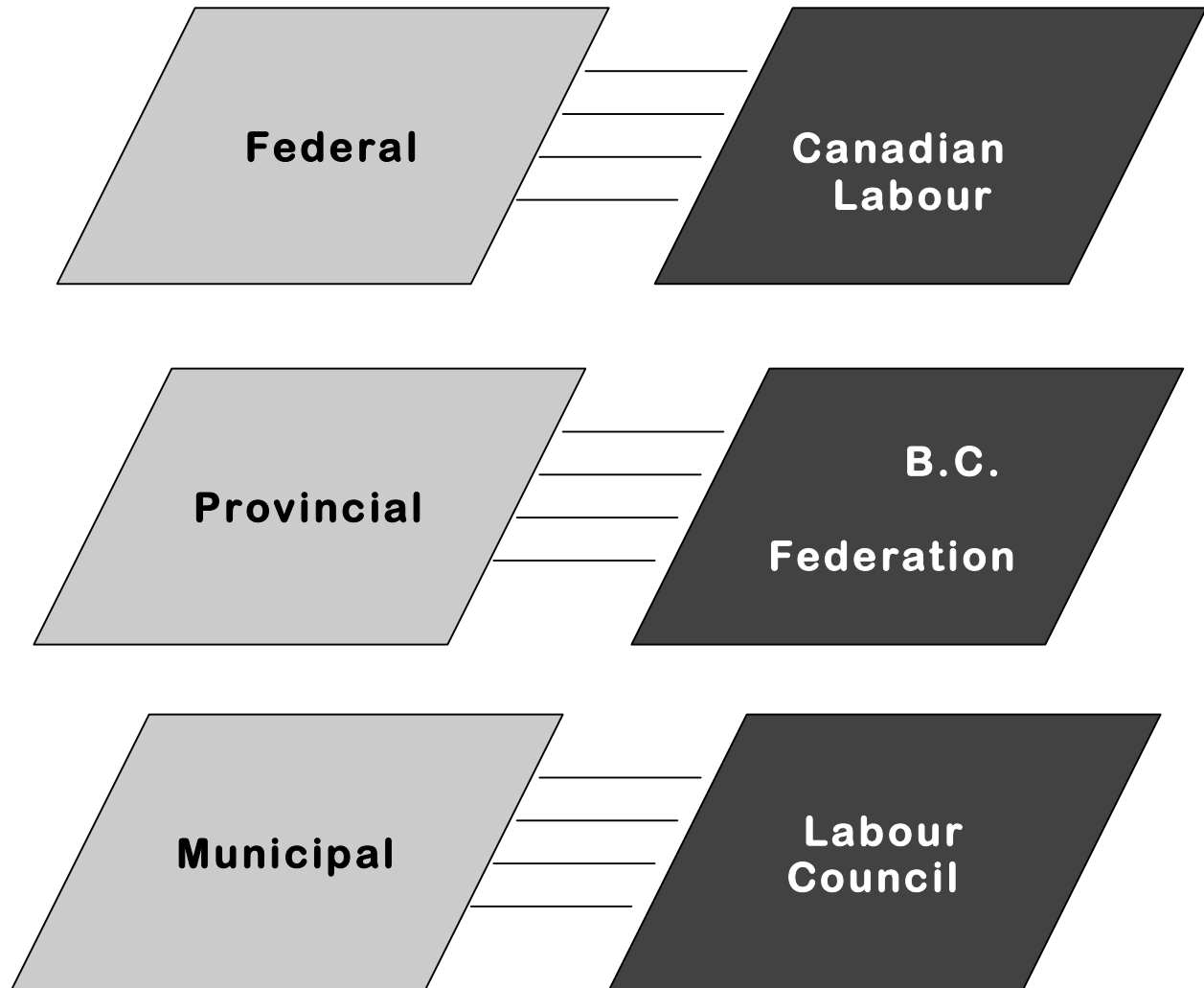
With the Labour Councils, the B.C. Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress as a broad structural base, COPE Local 378 is better able to represent the interests of our members, with broader educational opportunities, solidarity and a unified labour presence. Collectively Unions working together have a stronger voice. In unity, there is strength.

This sheet provides more in depth information of the services provided by the various organizations in the Labour movement.

## **B.C. FEDERATION OF LABOUR**

### **GOVERNMENT**

### **LABOUR**



**The Labour Movement is organized on the National, Provincial and Local levels, similar to government structures**

You are part of the wider union movement. This consists of:

locally:	_____	your local Labour Council
provincially:	_____	the provincial Federation of Labour
nationally:	_____	regional and national offices of the Canadian Labour Congress

### **THE CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS:**

The Congress provides a range of services including education courses and deals with matters that affect the labour movement nationally, e.g. relations with the federal government and with the international trade union movement. Prominent issues are manpower, immigration, free trade, the increasing control of the national economy by multi-national corporations and the effects of new technology on employment levels. The CLC convention is held every second year.

### **PROVINCIAL FEDERATION OF LABOUR:**

Your local union is affiliated to the provincial federation of labour as well as to the local labour council. The federations are the provincial arm of the CLC; they provide many services dealing with matters that affect the union movement provincially such as labour legislation on matters like apprenticeship, employment standards, human rights, health and safety at work, and social services legislation. Their annual Convention reflects the concerns of the labour movement in each province; federations also pressurize governments on immediate needs such as plant closures, unemployment, and the effects of adverse provincial legislation.

### **THE LABOUR COUNCIL**

Your local union is required by the international union to affiliate to the local labour council, which is the municipal arm of the CLC. As such, it represents the interests of labour and has an effective voice in dealing with municipal Councils, Boards and Commissions. You can contribute to its activities and in turn you will get help with:

- ❖ information on union and employer activities in the area;
- ❖ education classes;
- ❖ the work of the various committees of the Council;
- ❖ strikes or disputes...with your employer (the Labour Council coordinates help, support and financial assistance when called upon by the local).

With the Labour Councils, the BC Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress as a broad structural base, COPE Local 378 is better able to represent the interests of our members, with broader educational opportunities, solidarity and a unified labour presence. Collectively, Unions working together have a stronger voice. In unity, there is strength.

# TOP 5 LABOUR MYTHS

## Myth #1

Labour-management conflict  
can and should be replaced by  
labour-management co-operation.

As an ideal, this is quite acceptable. But unfortunately we live in a society that is based on competition, not co-operation; a society in which we are all supposed to compete with one another for our respective shares of the national income. That's the underlying principle of private enterprise.

Many persons in both unions and companies wish it were otherwise. But they are trapped in the present system. They know that it will take a complete reversal of basic beliefs, and the abandonment of our entire economic philosophy, before a change to labour-management co-operation can take place.

Conflict is built into the present system, and strikes are simply one of its manifestations. As long as the relationship between management and labour is based on their respective power, the extent of that power will occasionally be tested – if only because so many employers refuse to take workers' requests for better pay and working conditions seriously unless they are willing to strike for them

## Myth #2

Union-won wage increases are the chief cause  
of inflation, so controls on wage increases will keep down  
the cost of living.

Wages go up as a response to rising prices. That has been the finding of every objective, scientific study.

Wages are continually subject to restraint through the machinery of collective bargaining, compulsory conciliation, and legal restrictions on the right to strike. Unlike other forms of income – profits, stock dividends, rents, professional fees – wage levels must be set through negotiations with employers.

The only fair (and effective) form of wage control is price control. If limits were enforced on price increases, it would automatically lower workers' needs and expectations, and they would gladly settle for correspondingly lower wage hikes.

### Myth #3

The public is not represented in  
– and is the innocent victim of –  
strikes by workers in the public sector.

Public employees are exactly what their label implies. They are the public's employees.

They are our employees, and when they go on strike they do so for the same reason employees in the private sector go on strike because they are dissatisfied with the way we – through our elected representatives – are treating them.

The public, as an employer, really has no more right to claim immunity from strikes than any other employer who doesn't make an honest effort to treat his workers fairly.

Unions representing public employees have no alternative, when governments refuse to bargain in good faith, than to exercise their right to strike, when its members vote for this action.

People who may be hurt by such strikes should make an effort to look at both sides of the dispute – to determine if their employees' demands are justified. If this is clearly the case, then public pressure should be directed at governments to offer a fair settlement, rather than to enact strike-breaking laws.

### Myth #4

Unions don't need, and shouldn't  
be given the right to strike.

Although it's not generally realized, the right to strike is a fundamental right no less important than freedom of speech or freedom of the press. Why? Simply because it is a vital part of the collective bargaining process.

Free collective bargaining is the only instrument that workers have to protect and promote their interests in our economic system. Without that ultimate right to withdraw their labour, they would have no strength to bargain, and would have to accept whatever wages and working conditions their employer decided to impose on them.

The only thing workers have to bargain with is their skill or their labour. Denied the right to withhold it as a last resort, they become powerless. The strike is therefore not a breakdown of collective bargaining – it is the indispensable cornerstone of that process.

Modern unions, in fact, through collective bargaining, prevent many more strikes than they initiate. Do away with unions, and the ensuing economic chaos would make current strike disruptions seem trivial by comparison.

## Myth #5

Unions are always making  
“unreasonable” wage demands.

What is a “reasonable” wage demand?

One that meets the workers' needs? One based on the employers' ability to pay? One that's tied to productivity?

The fact is that nobody has yet devised a workable formula for determining wage increases that would be considered reasonable by the workers, by their employer, by the public, the press and the government.

Besides, most employers – except occasionally when in genuine financial stress – still refuse to open their books to union negotiators. Unions are thus denied access to the data on profits, productivity and labour costs that they must have in order to formulate “reasonable” demands. The only alternative in our private enterprise society is to go for as much as they think their members are entitled to get.

## **What do we expect of you?**

- ❖ **To attend Union meetings**
- ❖ **To abide by your Collective Agreement - Your Contract of Employment**
  - ❖ **Do not make private deals with Management**
    - ❖ **Do not cross picket lines**
  - ❖ **To support your fellow Union Members**
  - ❖ **To abide by our Constitution & Bylaws**
- ❖ **To see your Job Steward if you have questions or concerns**